Oxford

STOCK No 752

MADE IN U. S. A.

"A Fear of Spiders"

A One-Act by Joachim St. Muggstein

Characters:
Jennifer, Sandra, Mr. Larrabee

Direction:
Enormously restrained and staccato.

"A Fear of Spiders." A One-Act.

(Lights go up in a summer house. There is one chair, covered with a sheet. A floor lamp is on. There is a window, outside which it is dark. Mr. Larrabee, Mrs. Jennifer Perrin, and Sandra Perrin are walking about.)

Jennifer. No one's burglarized the place. It'll probably take all day to move in, but I can't think of anything we need to buy new for the summer.

Larrabee. No, you're ready to move in, I'd say.

Jennifer. I'm very grateful for your driving us out here, Mr. Larrabee.

Larrabee. Please call me Francis. It was a pleasure, and I shall be equally glad to drive you out here with your things tomorrow or Monday, whichever you decide.

Jennifer. It's terribly kind of you, Francis, but doesn't your office work or something make it rather a sacrifice?

Larrabee. My schedule is quite flexible. As you should know by now.

Jennifer. Mr. Larrabee, you're long due for great thanks. You have been wonderfully kind these months. I don't know where Sandra and I would be without all the kindness and help you've shown us--

Larrabee. As they used to say, tut tut.

Jennifer. Mmr. Larrabee, since my husband died, it's been a long uphill fight. Now I feel we've made it, Sandy and I.

Larrabee. For whatever part I have had, I am myself grateful.

Sandra. I hope they've got a better bunch of boys around here than that crowd that hung around last summer.

Larrabee. I'm certain that they do.

(Sandra cries out and stamps.)

Jennifer. What is it, darling, what's wrong?

Sandra. Oh God, the most terrible spider. It was <u>this</u> big.

Jennifer. Did you kill it?

Sandra. I sure did. What a mess.

Larrabee. Tell me, why did you have to kill it? Spiders are our friends.

Sandra. Not <u>my</u> friends. I hate spiders.

Jennifer. I do, too. Terrible things.

Larrabee. Are you afraid of them?

Jennifer. Spiders and heights.

Sandra. Heights don't bother me much. I like to climb things.

Larrabee. I go along with you, Sandra. I like heights. Climbing can be wonderful fun. But I also like spiders.

(The girl and her mother both shiver a bit.)

Jennifer. Oh, I just <u>hate</u> spiders.

Larrabee. That's very interesting. You see, I <u>am</u> a spider.

(The lights within the cottage go out. There is a flash of lightning, and the side of the cottage becomes a scrim. An interesting silhouette is revealed: where Larrabee stands, in profile, he forms the head and two legs of an enormous spider. The other six legs, invisible in ordinary light, are spread out around him. The lights go

on again, and all is as before.)
Larrabee. Will you marry me, Mrs. Perrin?
(Thunderclap. From the lightning flash a moment ago.)
Jennifer. I've been expecting you to ask. Yet I'm somehow startled.
Larrabee. I don't know why it should be so startling. We've both had a lot to learn about each other. And we have learned. It is this learning which constitutes a growing love.
Jennifer. I'll have to take a while to answer.
Larrabee. Why?
Jennifer. What?
Larrabee. Why.
Jennifer. Well, one must hesitate at these moments.
Sandra. She needs time.
Larrabee. Does she.
Jennifer. It takes a while to get used to the idea--
Larrabee. You said a second ago that you had been expecting me to ask.
Jennifer. Yes, but now that you've asked it has to be thought about.
Larrabee. You have thought about it.
Sandra. What she means is, I think, it doesn't quite feel the way she expected it to--
Jennifer. Yes. Yes, that's it.
Larrabee. And consequently her answer has changed.
Jennifer. No, that needn't be so at all--
Sandra. Mr. Larrabee, go easy, you have asked an awfully big thing--
Larrabee. I know that, Honey Chuckle. I rather expected, though, that your mother was as ready as I.
Jennifer. I didn't ever mean that I wasn't. I just-- would like a little time, Francis.
Larrabee. Take all your time.
Jennifer. Part of it is that I don't feel too well today. Slightly dizzy, like the time we went to the top of the RCA building. It's almost as though I were seeing things or something like that.
[illegible]
Larrabee. Come, now. Mrs. Perrin, I believe a person of your strength and maturity knows how to tell reality from fancy and disorder.
Sandra. That's not what she means.
Larrabee. Ah. And what does she mean.
Sandra. I think I know what she means by seeing things.
Larrabee. Tell me, tell me.
Sandra. Well, I don't know.
Jennifer. You know how it is when you're tired.
Larrabee. I don't get tired.
Jennifer. Reality is sometimes hard to keep track of.
Larrabee. Some people do not bother to keep track of it, but certainly not yourself.
Sandra. I'm not sure what reality <u>is</u>.
Larrabee. You'll find out soon enough, my pet. Mrs. Perrin,

I ask that you marry me. You know all about me now that you could want to know. I think I know a good deal of you, and of your daughter. In the time we have spent together, we have shared both pleasure and understanding. I feel sure that we can share a future of respect, understanding and happiness.

Jennifer. Happiness is very difficult to achieve, Mr. Larrabee.

Larrabee. Sometimes less so for two than for one.

Sandra. And three?

Larrabee. Not impossible, sugar duck.

Jennifer. Mr. Larrabee, I would like a little time.

Larrabee. If you think you need it. If there is that much doubt in your mind.

Jennifer. I expect I will consent. But let it be a few days from now.

(Her eyes lock with Larrabee's.)

Sandra. You do have to be careful, Mr. Larrabee. There's a lot to think about.

Jennifer. I've made up my mind, Sandra. I will marry you, Francis.

Larrabee. That's fine. Thank you, Jennifer.

Sandra. Remember, Mother-- that's a very big decision--

Jennifer. What is there to be afraid, Sandra?

Larrabee. Yes, Sandra. What is there to be afraid of?

(Sandra looks away from both of them.)

Sandra. Heights, I guess. Heights and spiders.

(Larrabee laughs.)

Larrabee. Sandra, chicken, there are times I want to eat you all up. You and your Mother both.

Sandra. It's stopped raining. Shall we drive home now?

Larrabee. I know a good place for dinner.

(All go. There is another flash of lightning that goes through the scrim. This time there is no spider silhouette. As the curtain closes, thunder.)

'A Fear of Spiders'  One-Act, 1959  Written in multi-play night